(e) and (f) The owners of the vessel have deposited with the commissioner for Workmens' Compensation, Mumbai & Chennai and Shipping Master, Mumbai requisite amounts towards death compensation, loss of baggage and balance of wages and salaries of crew members & the officers.

(g) Govt. have granted permission to DG(S) to initiate enquiry proceeding against Capt. A.P. Gonahalekar, Master of mv Mount-I under Section 363 of Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 for violating International Regulations for Prevention of Collision 1972. A Merchant Shipping Notice is also being issued to all Ship Masters by the Directorate General of Shipping, Mumbai bringing out the dangers involving in the use of VHF chennal in restricted visibility.

**Practice of Sati**

*80. SHRI JAI PRAKASH AGARWAL: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the cases of sati which came to light in the country since Independence;

(b) whether those responsible for this crime have been prosecuted;

(c) if so, the judgement given in each case;

(d) the reaction of the Government thereto;

(e) whether the Government propose to formulate a strict legislation in order to completely ban the practice of Sati;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

(g) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI S. R. BOMMAI): (a) to (g) The National Crime Records Bureau has information only as to the number of cases reported under the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 during 1989 to 1996, which is as under:

| Sl. No. | Year | Cases reported |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | 1989 | 36 |
| 2. | 1990 | 52 |
| 3. | 1991 | 17 |
| 4. | 1992 | 1 |
| 5. | 1993 | 5 |
| 6. | 1994 | 2 |
| 7. | *1995 | 2 |
| 8. | 1996 | 10 |

*Figures from Bihar, Rajasthan and Daman & Diu are upto May, October and Novermber, 1995 respectively.

(e) and (f) The Government has enacted the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 to provide for effective prevention of the Commission of Sati and its glorification.

(g) Does not arise.

[*English*]

**National Plastics Waste Management Task Force**

679. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have since considered the recommendation of the National Plastics Waste Management Task Force that as more than 60 percent of the plastics generated in the country goes in for material recycling, a ban may be imposed on dirty coloured carry bags; and

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Task Force has recommended the ban on the manufacture of dirty coloured carry bags with visible contamination. However, the Task Force has also observed that over 60% of the plastics waste generated in the country goes in for material recycling. The Ministry of Environment and Forests has constituted an Implementation and Monitoring Committee to oversee the progress and follow-up of the recommendations of the Task Force.

**Forest Cover in the Country**

680. SHRI KESHAB MAHANTA:

SHRI A. G. S. RAM BABU:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the extent of forest cover in the country Statewise;

(b) the reasons for reduction in the forest cover; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to increase the land under forest cover?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ): (a) As per the State of Forest Report, 1995, the forest cover in the country is 639,600 sq. km.i.e. 19.46% of the geographical area. The State-wise details of forest cover is given in the Statement.

(b) The main reasons for reduction in forest cover can be attributed to wide gap in demand and supply of fuelwood, fodder & timber, due to rapid increase in population resulting in unsustainable withdrawals, damage due to shifting cultiviation, forest fires, grazing and also due to diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes.

(c) The various steps proposed to be taken to increase the land under forest cover are:

*(i) Extensive afforestation/programmes by State* Governments from their own resources as well as with financial assistance from Government of India for afforestation, protection of forests and restoration of ecological balance.

(ii) Implementation of various Externally Aided Projects for conservation and augmentation of forest cover and resources.

(iii) Involvement of village communities for the regeneration of degraded forests through Joint Forest Management.

(iv) Regulation of diversion of forest lands for non-forest purposes under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

(v) Conservation and scientific management of Network of Protected Areas.

**Statement**

*Statement showing State-wise details of Forest Cover as per the State of Forest Report, 1995*

| Sl. No | State UT | Forest Cover (In sq.km) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 1. | Andhra Pradesh | 47,112 |
| 2. | Arunachal Pradesh | 68,621 |
| 3. | Assam | 24,061 |
| 4. | Bihar | 26,561 |
| 5. | Delhi | 26 |
| 6. | Goa, Daman & Diu | 1,250 |
| 7. | Gujarat | 12,320 |
| 8. | Haryana | 603 |
| 9. | Himachal Pradesh | 12,501 |
| 10. | Jammu & Kashmir | 20,433 |
| 11. | Karnataka | 32,382 |
| 12. | Kerala | 10,336 |
| 13. | Madhya Pradesh | 1,35,164 |
| 14. | Maharashtra | 43,843 |
| 15. | Manipur | 17,558 |
| 16. | Meghalaya | 15,714 |
| 17. | Mizoram | 18,576 |
| 18. | Nagaland | 14,291 |
| 19. | Orissa | 47,107 |
| 20. | Punjab | 1,342 |
| 21. | Rajasthan | 13,280 |
| 22. | Sikkim | 3,127 |
| 23. | Tamil Nadu | 17,766 |
| 24. | Tripura | 5,538 |
| 25. | Uttar Pradesh | 33,986 |
| 26. | West Bengal | 8,276 |
| 27. | Andaman & Nicobar Islands | 7,615 |
| 28. | Chandigarh | 7 |
| 29. | Dadra & Nagar Haveli | 204 |
| 30. | Lakshdweep* | - |
| 31. | Pondicherry* | - |
| | Total | 6,39,600 |

*No discernible forest cover.

**Automatic Digital Exchanges**

681. SHRI P. R. DASMUNSI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Autometic Digital Exchanges in the country, State-wise, and

(b) the number of villages proposed to be connected with the telephones and the said exchanges proposed to be set up during Ninth Five Year Plan?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHIR BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) As on 31.10.97, 22228 number of automatic digital exchanges are working in the country. Circle-Wise details are given in the statement enclosed.

(b) 275839 villages remain uncovered as on 31.10.97. These are planned to be connected during the 9th five year plan. 3763 numbers of exchanges are proposed to be set up during 9th five year plan.